



BECOME A GESTALT PSYCHOTHERAPIST

2022 STUDENT INFORMATION PACK

FIRST ROUND APPLICATIONS CLOSE 18TH OCTOBER 2021

**FOUNDATION STUDIES IN RELATIONAL
GESTALT COUNSELLING**

**ADVANCED CLINICAL TRAINING IN
RELATIONAL GESTALT PSYCHOTHERAPY**

**CONNECTGROUND CLINIC STUDENT
INTERNSHIP**



Gestalt Therapy Australia (GTA) offers comprehensive psychotherapy training that explores and deepens relational capacities within the framework of Gestalt theory and practice. Trainees are invited into an experiential process that will expand your self-awareness as a means to developing your therapeutic presence. This Relational Gestalt training provides significant opportunities for professional and personal development.

Our course is both career-changing and life-changing.

The four-year training program is accredited by PACFA as a Specialist Training (post-grad), and graduates of our program are eligible for PACFA membership and registration.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN OUR TRAINING PROGRAM

This document will give you a comprehensive overview of our course and show how it can develop your clinical practice and deepen your relational capacities.

We'd love to talk to you about our training program, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us. Your first point of contact is Katrina Coghlan who is our course administrator.

Please also attend one of our **Relational Gestalt Taster & Course Information Sessions**. These evenings are an opportunity to have an experience of our experiential inquiry-based learning method and get a brief introduction to Relational Gestalt thinking. We will also talk about the course structure and answer your questions about the program.

Information sessions are planned for August 17th & September 29th 6pm-9 pm. Bookings are now open and are essential.

Our online application process will open in August. In the meantime, contact Katrina to register your interest.

Please note. we have a limited number of spaces in our 1st-year program. In 2021 we achieved a full intake and ran with 2 groups (one afternoon and one evening, a total of 28 students). Being a part of our first intake process will help secure a place in 2022.

Relational Gestalt Therapy (RGT) draws on rich philosophical traditions that support direct engagement with life as it is lived. It moves us away from broad categorisations and simplifications of human experience that end up being pathologising or otherwise amplify individual blame and shame.

We are interested in the humanistic, existential and relational underpinnings of Gestalt theory and are committed to understanding how these ideas interplay to inform a holistic and compassionate understanding of human existence (including illness and suffering) and ways to support choice, vitality and health for all.

Healthy people are self-regulating individuals, able to respond flexibly to changing circumstances and support themselves in many respects while accepting mutual interdependence with other people and the environment. They can strike a balance between looking after their needs and caring for the needs of other people and their community, recognizing their independence with the environment and caring for it as well. They take responsibility for the choices that they make in life and especially for the meaning they give their life and they experience their ability to actualize themselves within the limits of their life circumstances. Jenny Mackewn, [Developing a Gestalt Counselling](#) (1997).



Gestalt Therapy Australia (GTA) was founded 26 years ago. It has become a nationally and internationally renowned training program. We pride ourselves on remaining true to the experiential roots of gestalt training programs globally, whilst also striving to be at the cutting edge of contemporary Gestalt thinking. Our faculty is highly experienced with a broad range of professional backgrounds and commitment to Relational Gestalt practice and teaching. All faculty are practising Gestalt therapists.

GTA offers a unique opportunity to become a Gestalt Therapist. Our 4-year program focuses on developing personal awareness and therapeutic skills to enable you to work with others in profound and healing ways. It takes time to become a therapist. At GTA, students are immersed in an experiential learning process that is holistic, integrated and developmental. It is primarily designed to foster capacities essential for deep connection. In this way, it stands apart from other courses that can be more dryly academic or module-based. Learning is supported by lots of practice and skill development and plentiful learning opportunities for ongoing feedback from faculty and peers. Students come together and form a learning group that will be a source of rich growth during the program and beyond. As deep connections are made, community is found.

Gestalt theory is rich. It supports ways of understanding the human condition that moves beyond simple categories and diagnostic labels and towards a more nuanced and compassionate meeting of people as they are. Gestalt practitioners are always sensitive to the cultural and environmental context of clients' life and experience. With a here-and-now focus, Gestalt is process-oriented and pays attention to broader description including, including our immediate felt sense and embodiment. In Gestalt meaning emerges in embodied relational process.

Our students typically come from backgrounds in allied health, including; psychology, social work, education, counselling, occupational therapy, nursing, pastoral care, people management (HR), coaching and other organisational roles. Our course is a deep dive into an integrated therapeutic modality and meaningful support to understanding the human condition for these people. It also supports systemic thinking and group work, including work with groups, couples, families, teams and organisations.

Graduates of our program work in various settings and take up many different roles, with many graduates working in education, hospitals, youth services, community health, and mental health settings. Many also have busy private practices.



ConnectGround is our community clinic - the place where Relational Gestalt theory and practice come together in profound ways. Staffed by interns and volunteers, and supervised by our clinical team, we offer low-cost counselling and psychotherapy service to the community of Melbourne.

ConnectGround internships begin in the 3rd year of the course and are a vital setting for students to get real-world experience of working with clients while being well held in the incredibly supportive and professional setting of our clinic.

ConnectGround offers a unique way of putting learning into action. It is an incredibly well supported 'apprenticeship in gestalt psychotherapy' that enlivens learning and help grow gestalt therapists while offering vital relational support to people who would not otherwise be able to access it. We currently offer 16 internships concurrently and spaces for more than 60 clients per week.

OVERVIEW OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

YEARS ONE & TWO

Foundation Studies in Relational Gestalt Counselling.

Introduces students to Relational Gestalt counselling through the exploration of gestalt theory and practice. This is a stand-alone course or is a prerequisite for further study at GTA.

150+ contact hours per year.

YEARS THREE & FOUR

The Advanced Clinical Training in Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy.

Expands on the Relational Gestalt Therapy of the previous two years and develops the clinical thinking and practice competencies to move into a clinic placement

150+ contact hours per year.

ConnectGround Clinic Student Internship.

During the final 2 years of training, GTA students are expected to undertake an internship in our community-based clinic ConnectGround. Most placements are 12 months in duration and are often started in the 3rd year and completed in the 4th year.

This is approximately another 200 contact hours across a 12-month placement.

WHY DO OUR COURSE?

At GTA we are committed to lifelong learning and our program will suit people at different stages of their professional development. The course becomes a life-affirming way to grow your personal and interpersonal capacities within a sustaining and vibrant community of practice.

GTA students are often social workers, psychologists, nurses, teachers, occupational therapists, psychiatrists etc. They have had their professional training, and they want more. They come to GTA to extend their clinical thinking, and to deepen their presence – a fuller capacity to be with themselves and others.

GTA students go on a journey of discovery to develop their embodied awareness and to stretch their range of compassion, curiosity, courage and intimacy.

Relational Gestalt Therapy is offered as a counterpoint to a dominant medicalising world view that sets mental health (and by extension mental illness) in a pointless polarity that pathologises, simplifies and shames human suffering.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO LEARN IN THE FOUR YEARS?

While the training cannot be structured into a neat and linear progression, each of the training years focuses on developing a specific set of competencies that aim to develop emerging Gestalt therapists.

In the first year, students are encouraged to explore and deepen their self-awareness. The focus is on building capacity for a nuanced appreciation of their embodied experience. That is the sensitivity to the sensations, feelings and thoughts that make up their moment-to-moment experience, as well as an understanding of their capacity to work with emotional arousal and affect regulation. This self-awareness is the ground on which the ongoing development of the therapist is built.

In the second year, the development of this awareness process moves from a focus on self-process to focusing on others, and in particular understanding how self-experience is shaped by this engagement and interaction.

What can I expect to learn? (cont)

In the third year, the focus returns to the experience of the individual, but with a specific focus on better understanding how developmental contexts shape and influence the individual experience. This 'field' focus also seeks to take into account the complex social and cultural situations in which we are all embedded.

Fourth-year aims to integrate the learning of the three previous years, supporting students to weave together self-awareness, awareness of others and sensitivity to how our situatedness shapes our experience can be applied in therapeutic practice. In this student's engage with what they know of their own relational patterns and explore their developmental edges as emerging therapists

In summary, the learning trajectory (though never linear) can be represented in the following way:

Self / How am I in the world. What do I sense, feel and think?

Self & Other / Who am I with you and who are you with me?

Self in Context / How do the contexts from which I have emerged shape who I am?

Self & Other in Context / Who am I as an emerging gestalt therapist?

BEING A STUDENT AT GTA

A GTA student is willing to participate in an inquiry-based learning process that is holistic and developmental. Effective learning at GTA involves responding to the experiences offered in the education and training program with leadership, agency, openness and commitment.

A central feature of being a student at GTA involves participating in an experiential learning group, and the wider GTA learning community and being responsive to unfolding events – especially as they manifest in the learning process in the training group. This interrelating involves making and sustaining relationships with fellow students and faculty through sharing personal experiences and repairing ruptures in relationships should they occur.

Engaging ever more fully in this relational activity requires developing deeper personal awareness and insight through self-reflection and inquiry. In the experiential learning process, students are encouraged to be curious and to investigate how they affect others and the environment through the way they relate and the choices they make. Students are challenged to take opportunities to move beyond established patterns and into new territory and novel experiences of themselves and others.

Over the four-year training program, students will inquire into (and develop) the seven personal abilities that we see as crucial to the practice of psychotherapy. These are Self-Recognising, Embodying, Responding, Interrelating, Experimenting, Contextualising and Presence. These personal abilities become an important tool for self-awareness and conversation across all aspects of the program.

Students will engage with faculty in dialogue about their personal abilities using the Personal Abilities Framework (PAF) throughout their studies. You can find more information about the PAF on the GTA website.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Foundation Studies in Relational Gestalt Counselling

Year 1 & 2 is a two-year course that offers students the opportunity to understand and practice Relational Gestalt counselling through the exploration of theory and practice. The modules are:

Module 1 / Personal Abilities Of The Therapist

This module focuses on the personal development of the counsellor. The module includes identifying and developing essential capacities for healthy relating as well as inquiring into the contextual influences that support and constrain us. The module is based on Relational Gestalt principles providing students with a “lived experience” of the Relational Gestalt approach. Core learning opportunities will be provided in explorations of the student's experience through personal and interpersonal inquiry and the group process.

Module 2 / Relational Gestalt Theory

This module focuses on the central theoretical underpinnings of Relational Gestalt Therapy. The module creates opportunities for students to discover the essence of relational philosophy and translate these into practice. The module is based on key Gestalt theory and Relational principles. Emphasis is given to the theory that informs both the core ideas and the methodology of a Relational Gestalt approach to counselling.

Module 3 / Relational Gestalt Methods

This module provides the practice methodology for Relational Gestalt Therapy. The module develops the application of gestalt principles to the practice of counselling and integrates core gestalt concepts such as field theory, phenomenology and dialogue and begins to map these alongside more traditional and evidence-based approaches to mental health.

Module 4 / Skill Development Practice

This module focuses on practising Relational Gestalt ideas and methods. The module provides opportunities for micro-skills development in small practice groups. Specific micro-skills related to the basic counselling practice, Relational principles and Gestalt methodology are practised with peer and faculty feedback. The feedback process in the practice groups provides an opportunity for students to integrate their theoretical and methodological knowledge with their practice.

Module 5 / Specialist Gestalt Practice

This module focuses on specialist Gestalt practice. In first-year students are invited into a 3-day process around the Personal Abilities of the Therapist. In the second year, the focus shifts to exploring taking up the role of therapist and thinking about Relational Gestalt Practice in the clinic setting.

Module 6 / Specialist Gestalt Application

This module focus is on an application of Relational Gestalt Therapy. It is a residential training event facilitated by a GTA faculty or a guest trainer with expertise in a specialist area of counselling and psychotherapy practice. This is a whole school event.

COURSE DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED): Advanced Clinical Training In Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy

Yr 3 & 4 is a two-year course that expands on the relational gestalt psychotherapy practice of the previous two years. The modules are:

Module 1 / Gestalt Personal Abilities

This module focuses on the personal development of the psychotherapist. The module includes students being engaged in experiences that develop essential capacities for dialogic relation as well as understanding and integrating their self-experience with relation to their core organising themes. The module is based on relational principles, illustrates Gestalt ideas and demonstrates Gestalt methods thus providing students with a “lived experience” of the relational Gestalt approach. Core learning opportunities will be provided through exploration of the students experience on a personal, relationship and group level.

Module 2 / Relational Gestalt Theory

This module focuses on the foundation principles of Relational Gestalt theory. The module explores relational principles as the foundation from which Gestalt theory emerges, as well as all core Gestalt theory and related concepts. The breadth of relational philosophy is condensed into a range of practice principles that encompass the core elements of the Gestalt approach. Emphasis is given to the theory that informs both the core ideas and the methods of the relational Gestalt approach to psychotherapy.

Module 3 / Relational Gestalt Methods

This module provides the methodological framework of Relational Gestalt therapy. The module integrates relational principles, Gestalt theory and methods, common factors evidence-based practice and mental health practitioner competencies and provides an opportunity for students to deepen their investigation into psychotherapy processes and ethical considerations. Students inquire into how each psychotherapy process is influenced by their core organising themes. This integrative approach helps students to better understand how their personal experience organises their professional practice.

Module 4 / Skill Development Practice

This module focuses on practicing Relational Gestalt ideas and methods. The module provides opportunities for advanced skill development in small practice and supervision groups. Specific micro-skills are reinforced but with a new focus on identifying and working with emerging themes and psychotherapy processes. Relational principles and gestalt methodology are highlighted and practised in small groups with coaching and live supervision.

Module 5 / Specialist Gestalt Practice

This module focuses on a specialist application of Gestalt practice in the clinical setting. The focus is on working with specific mental health complexities such as trauma.

Module 6 / Specialist Gestalt Application

This module focus is on an application of Relational Gestalt Therapy. It is a residential training event facilitated by a GTA faculty or a guest trainer with expertise in a specialist area of counselling and psychotherapy practice. This is a whole school event.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Student Internship

ConnectGround Internships provide an opportunity to work with clients in a supportive and collegial learning environment. Interns carry a caseload of 3-4 clients per week, attend fortnightly group supervision, fortnightly individual supervision (with the senior therapist) and have access to 4 additional professional development training opportunities per year.

The internship provides students with the opportunity to implement and consolidate the knowledge and skills they are developing during the program, by offering people from our community meaningful, affordable, medium to long term psychotherapy. The clinic staff balance the needs of both students and clients with a focus on providing a high-quality counselling and psychotherapy service to the community.

Upon graduation from the training program, you will be eligible for student membership of PACFA.

For full membership, you will need to log 200 hours face to face client contact hours. You can count all of your internship client contact hours for this purpose, and hours made in other settings.

To support this goal, and for more opportunities to practice, some interns will continue in the clinic and others return post-graduation as volunteers (you must have completed and passed all GTA assessments to volunteer). Most interns will complete 100 hours of client work whilst in the clinic.

Group and individual supervision are mandatory for all active interns. All these hours can be counted towards the course's supervision requirements.

You can apply for an exemption from the internship if you are deemed to have sufficient experience and opportunities to practice throughout the course of your studies (see below). Students may apply for an exemption from the internship for the following reasons:

- The student has already completed a professionally recognized training program, has an established practice and holds professional membership to a relevant body (AASW, APS, ACA, PACFA etc).
- The student is currently engaged in providing face to face counselling in either an organisation or private practice, has access to equipment to video sessions, and access to clients who are willing to be filmed
- The student receives individual supervision regularly and has access to some group supervision.

In some circumstances, a student who meets the above criteria will opt for a shorter placement for the experience. This would require a minimum 6-month commitment from the student.

You can visit the ConnectGround website to see the variety of services we offer to clients, students and other professionals. www.connectground.com.au

APPLYING TO BE A STUDENT AT GTA

KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

- An undergraduate degree in a relevant field such as counselling, psychology, social work, nursing, psychiatric nursing, occupational therapy, medicine, teaching, welfare and community development, or pastoral care. *In some circumstances, provision may be made to accept an application on the basis of an individual demonstrating relevant life or work experience, a history of personal therapy and an identifiable capacity to become a counsellor.*
- Two years of work experience in their field with professional supervision or mentoring (i.e. work experience after completion of a relevant undergraduate degree), or willingness to gain experience concurrent to the program.
- Attendance at both the group and individual interviews and confirmation of suitability from personal and professional referees.
- Demonstrated ability to understand and practice ethical behaviour with a willingness to have an ethical stance integral to participating in this education program. GTA training program teaches to the PACFA Code of Ethics (www.pacfa.org.au) but also references the APS and AASW Code of Ethics.
- The successful applicant will be required to sign the Course Contract and Professional Integrity Policy. You can download this from our website or [use this link](#).

APPLICATION PROCESS

The process of admission to the GTA education and training program involves completing and returning an Online Application. This will include:

1. An introductory letter that addresses the following: Key Selection Criteria (see above), and a brief statement about why you have chosen this course and how it fits your personal and professional development needs. Please also include any relevant details of personal therapy including date, duration and therapist
2. A detailed professional CV with contact details of two referees (one each personal and professional)
3. Payment of \$200 non-refundable application fee.

You will then be invited into the interview process and referees will be contacted at this point.

Our online application process will open in August 2022. Register your interest at admin@gestaltcentre.com.au and we'll send you the link when applications open.

Please note: numbers are limited to 15 students per group (total 30). Early application is a way to secure a place in the 2022 intake.

First-round applications close on the 18th of October 2021.

There is a lot more information about the Gestalt Centre and Gestalt Therapy Australia on our website. Here you can see some faculty and other community members' profiles and read more about community and PD activities run through the centre. Visit us here: www.gestalttherapyaustralia.com.au

INTERVIEW PROCESS

GTA considers admission to the education and training program a mutual selection process with both GTA and prospective students actively engaged in deciding about an applicant's suitability.

To assist this, GTA makes every effort to be clear with applicants about what is being offered in the education and training program. The applicant will be required to attend a group interview and an individual interview. Within this process both the applicant and Gestalt Therapy Australia will have a chance to discuss readiness and suitability.

The process of student selection is non-discriminatory on the grounds of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, culture, religion or any disability or belief that does not directly interfere with the capacity of students to competently fulfil the education and training program.

Upon receipt of an application form and payment, applicants will be contacted for the group interview.

STEP 1. GROUP INTERVIEW

The group interview will be held at GTA on **Tuesday 26th October 2021, 6.30-8.00pm.**

The group interview will involve an experiential exercise including an opportunity to share your experience and engage in some dialogue with other participants in the group. It may also give you an opportunity to experience what it is like to be in a group setting. At the group interview, you will be able to book your individual interview so please bring your diaries.

STEP 2. INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

The 30-minute individual interview will be an opportunity for applicants to expand further on their experience and their interest in joining the training program. In this interview, there will be an opportunity to ask questions about the course. Individual interviews will take place on **4th November 2021**, or by arrangement with staff.

RECEIVING AN OFFER

Acceptance into the course is communicated personally by telephone and followed up with an enrolment package. Applicants confirm their place by signing the course contract and paying a non-refundable deposit of \$1,500.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STUDYING AT GTA

PERSONAL INTEGRITY & PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS POLICY

Applicants are asked to sign a statement agreeing to comply with all the conditions of the Personal Integrity & Professional Standards Policy this is available on the website and will be included in the application process. Here you will be asked to make any relevant disclosures as appropriate. It is important that you read this document before submitting your application.

Please note all those entering the 3rd year of the program will need to complete a Working with Children and Police Check.

ACCREDITATION

Applicants come to GTA from many professional backgrounds. Many are already working in the field with relevant qualifications and memberships of professional organisations. Others will not yet be eligible for full professional membership. These students may be interested in gaining registration with an organisation like the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) or the Australian Counselling Association (ACA). We recommend that you research your options and make enquiries to the relevant accreditation bodies that suit your circumstances. GTA staff are also available to talk to you about this, please contact the office.

GTA graduates are eligible to join the PACFA register.

COURSE FEES

In 2022 fees will be \$8,930 per year (this includes all training fees and full accommodation for both residential weekends). There is an additional fee of \$250 for the 4th year of the course that covers assessment costs that brings the cost for 4th year students to \$9,180.

In 2022 ConnectGround Student Internship (3rd & 4th Year) fees will be \$675 per term (\$2,700 per year). On average students spend 12-18 months completing their client hours.

PERSONAL THERAPY & SUPERVISION SESSIONS

While preferring students to be in individual therapy for the duration of the training program, a total of 50 hours of individual therapy is required to be completed by the end of 2nd year. It is highly recommended that you do some or all of this with a Gestalt Therapist.

In the 3rd & 4th-year students are required to undertake at least 100 hours of supervised client contact. Most students will do this as a part of the ConnectGround internship and will see the Senior Therapist for supervision approximately fortnightly (this is currently \$110 per session).

GESTALT THERAPY AUSTRALIA TRAINING CENTRE

Our training centre is located at 622 Lygon Street, Carlton North. Each class takes place over 23 weeknights and 12 days (5 weekends). Classes are conducted in the evening, usually between 5.30 to 8.45 pm. In 2021 we also ran an afternoon class between 1.00 and 4.15 pm.

We follow the school term and our classes run from February to October. Of the five weekends, 2 are residential and are held at the Yarra Valley Estate. Please note we do not operate on public holidays.

CONTACT US

If you require further information, contact Katrina our course administrator.

P: 9489-6300 or E: admin@gestaltcentre.com.au

Please Note: The information contained in this document is accurate at the time of publishing (June 2021), but despite our efforts to provide certainty, things can (and do) change over time. We will update this document as necessary.

RELATIONAL GESTALT THERAPY

Aware

Relational Gestalt Theory supports a deepening interest in immediate experience - in becoming aware of our embodied responses, we have access to vital information and can be more responsive (flexible & creative) in the here-and-now. The GTA student becomes practised at bringing their embodied experience into awareness and dialogue. In turn, this supports others to become more curious about their lived experience.

Relational Gestalt Theory (RGT): Phenomenology / Personal Ability Framework (PAF): Self-Recognising & Embodying

Enlivened

Relational Gestalt Theory supports deepening the personal and interpersonal skills that promote resilience, flexibility and health in individuals and supports better relating. Relational gestalt philosophy provides major support in this capacity building. The GTA student deepens their capacity for meaningful relationships and understands the power of connection in restoring spontaneity and joy in life. Supporting healthy relationships is the cornerstone of all we do at GTA.

RGT: Dialogue PAF: Responding & Interrelating

Dynamic

Relational Gestalt Theory offers a model of change that starts with acknowledging the 'what is'. Therefore, meaningful change is always congruent and supports authenticity. Gestalt is also dynamic and experimental; it challenges fixed ideas and energetic blockages and helps to create movement and growth.

The GTA student learns a model of change that is both supportive and challenging. Current behavioural and emotional issues can be understood contextually and developmentally, as well as having a present-day utility. Experiments help to move awareness and restore spontaneity and volition.

RGT: Field Theory & Paradoxical Theory of Change

Compassionate

Relational Gestalt Theory offers a meaningful critique of dominant individualistic and pathologizing approaches. Gestalt therapists understand that experience is always contextual (i.e. is relationally derived). Re-contextualising experience is generous and non-shaming. It allows for the inquiry: 'How does this make sense?'. The GTA student learns a model of change that is both supportive and challenging. Current behavioural and emotional issues can be understood contextually and developmentally, as well as having a present-day utility. Experiments help to move awareness and restore spontaneity and volition.

RGT: Field Theory / PAF: Contextualising

Transformative

Relational Gestalt Theory promotes deep listening, compassion and courage as part of a transformative awareness process. The training is offered as a developmental process, that deepens the student's capacity to be present to another, and to notice how this presence confirms the others' humanity. Instead, understanding is built together, and space is made for the unique expression of each individual. The GTA student deepens their capacity for presence, emotional attunement, and self-regulation so that they can bear witness to another's experience (distress or suffering) without the reflexive need to 'fix'.

RGT: Dialogue / PAF: Presence

Connected

Relational Gestalt Theory acknowledges the fundamental human longing for belonging throughout the training program. Space is also made for the vulnerability and shame that these longings surface. In this way, the GTA student is immersed in a community-building experiment and develops gratitude for, and skills to enhance, all the communities they belong to. The GTA student is immersed in a learning community. They grapple with longings around connection and shame. Understanding belonging in this way, they become shame sensitive practitioners and vital contributors to the broader social worlds from which they come.

Integrated RGT & PAF

